

Clarendon County Regular Council Meeting

Monday, March 9, 2015, 6:00 PM

East Clarendon Middle/High School Cafeteria, Turbeville, SC

Those in attendance:

Chairman Dwight L. Stewart, Jr.
Vice Chairman, W.J. Frierson, Sr.
Councilman, Billy G. Richardson
Councilman, AC English
Councilman, Benton Blakely
County Administrator, David W. Epperson
Clerk to Council, Dorothy M. Levy

Press in attendance: Bobby Baker, The Manning Times, Konstantin Vengerowsky, The Item

Others in attendance included:

Lynden Anthony Linda Lemon Archie Lemon
And 135 other Citizens of Clarendon County (list attached)

Chairman Stewart called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and Councilman Blakely led the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

I. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Stewart asked for an approval of the agenda.

Councilman Blakely made a motion to amend the agenda for March 9, 2015 to add Public Comments and it was seconded by Councilman English, Council voted Unanimous Approval to amend the agenda for the Regular Council Meeting adding a section for Public Comments.

II. Approval of Minutes

On motion by Councilman English and seconded by Vice Chairman Frierson, Council voted Unanimous Approval to the council meeting minutes for the Regular Meeting, which was held on February 9, 2015.

III. Board Appointment

On motion by Councilman English and seconded by Vice Chairman Frierson, Council voted Unanimous Approval to appoint Ms. Gina Gibbons Wilson to serve on the Clarendon County Disability and Special Needs Board to serve a four-year term.

Chairman Stewart stated that Mr. Edward Frye withdrew his application for appointment to the Library Board.

IV. Request for Out of State Travel

Administrator Epperson presented Council with a request from the Sheriff's Department for an out of state travel for two police officers. He continued by stating that our fallen officer, Investigation Holmes Smith, who passed away in November due to a vehicle accident while on duty, name will be placed on the wall of fallen Officers in Washington, DC. Administrator Epperson concluded by stating that two officers from Clarendon County were requested to escort the Smith family to Washington, DC for the ceremony.

On motion by Councilman Blakely and seconded by Vice Chairman Frierson, Council voted Unanimous Approval allowing two Clarendon County officers to travel with the family of the Late Investigator Holmes Smith to Washington, DC to attend the ceremony honoring fallen Officers.

V. Assistance and Support Agreements

Administrator Epperson presented Council with Agreements for Assistance and Support between Clarendon County and Florence, Darlington, and Cherokee County Sheriff's Offices. He continued by stating that these agreements would be renewed on an annual basis.

On motion by Vice Chairman Frierson and seconded by Councilman Richardson, Council voted Unanimous Approval to the Assistance and Support Agreements between Clarendon County and Florence, Darlington, and Cherokee County Sheriff's Offices.

VI. County's Current Road Paving Projects

Mr. Les Lockard, ICA Engineer, presented Council with an update on the current road-paving projects. He continued by stating that all drainage work has been completed and all pavings should be completed in two months.

VII. 2015 Capital Improvement Plan Update

Mr. Lynden Anthony, Controller, presented Council with an update on the Ten-year Capital Improvement Plan. He stated that the following:

		<u>Funding Source</u>
• Courthouse Renovation	In Progress	Revenue Bonds
• New C&D Landfill	In Progress	General County Revenue
• DSS Building	In Progress	General Obligation Bond
• Coroner's /Probation & Parole Offices	In Progress	General Obligation Bond
• Relocate Public Works Department	1-2 Years	Unrestricted Fund Balance
• Develop New Ball Field	1-2 Years	General County Revenue
• Replace Ball field Dugouts	1-2 Years	General County Revenue
• Sheriff's Department (10 new patrol cars)	1-2 Years	Capital Lease, Unrestricted Fund Balance
• Sheriff's Office –second floor	1-2 Years	Unrestricted Fund Balance & General Revenue
• Summerton Branch Library (Construct)	3-4 Years	GO Bond(s) and USDA Grants
• Turbeville Branch Library (Construct)	4-5 Years	GO Bond(s) and USDA Grants
• Summerton Park (new outdoor facility)	4-5 Years	Unknown at this time
• Rescue Units and Fire Engine	In-Progress	GO Bond and USDA Grants
• Roof Repairs- Station One	In-Progress	Unrestricted Fund Balance & SPD Revenue
• Wyboo Fire sub-station (Expand)	In-Progress	Unrestricted Fund Balance & SPD Revenue
• Turbeville Fire sub-station (Construct)	1-2 Years	GO Bond & Unrestricted Fund Balance
• Davis Station Fire sub-station (Relocate)	4-5 Years	Unrestricted Fund Balance & SPD Revenue
• Alcolu Fire sub-station (Expand)	1-2 Years	Unrestricted Fund Balance & SPD Revenue
• J.C. Britton Park (Expansion)	10-12 Years	Unknown
• Airport Land Acquisition	10-15 Years	Unrestricted Fund Balance & General Revenue
• Library Building (Construct)	10-15 Years	GO Bond, USDA Grants, & Community Funding
• New Airport runway	15+ Years	FAA Grant & General Fund

VIII. Update on Funding for Clarendon School District III

Chairman Stewart began his report on Clarendon District III School funding update by stating that we have 84 school districts in South Carolina and twenty-three of those school districts have fiscal autonomy; in which the local school board of trustees have the authority to establish a millage rate for the operation of schools. He continued by stating that another thirty-three school districts have authority to set millage rates with parameters established by stature, referenda, legislative action or county council action, and the remainder must call upon the legislation delegation or county governments to establish millage rates.

Chairman Stewart continued by stating that school funding comes from three sources; Federal 11%, State 45% and Local 44%. He further stated that actual funds spent per student were about \$7,566 for District 1, \$6,017 for District 2, and \$6,334 for District 3. He continued by stating that District 3 is among the highest in median household income which affects the amount of federal dollars available per student. Chairman Stewart further stated that he received numerous letters regarding funding for School District 3 with some of the information contained in the letters were incorrect. The letters were incorrect by stating that County Council has the authority to change the allocation of expenditures for the penny sales tax. Chairman Stewart stated that the one-cent sales tax legislation that was passed years ago by the legislative delegation could be used to pay off school debt and for capital improvements but could not be used for school operations.

Chairman Stewart further stated that the letters he received indicated that all funds should be distributed equally between the three school districts. He continued by stating that the only way he knows to distribute funds equally between the three school districts is to have one consolidated school district and he knows that the majority of the people here do not want to consolidate the school districts.

Chairman Stewart continued by stating that County Council does not have the authority to change the language in the penny sales tax legislation. He said that it would require a change by the Legislative Delegate. Chairman Stewart concluded his representation by asking Council for a motion to ask the Legislative Delegation to change the language in the penny sales tax legislation to include;

- To be used to retire debt service
- For Capital Improvement
- To help fund school operations

Councilman Blakely stated that Clarendon School District III has cut more programs than any other school district. He continued by stating that District III teachers have given up their salaries for two weeks to help save another teacher's job. Councilman Blakely further stated that District III has already cut the band and the art programs. He concluded by stating that School District III students are being discriminated against and it has to stop, he further said that we are three counties in one and it should not be that way.

On motion by Councilman Blakely and seconded by Councilman English, Council voted Unanimous Approval to ask the Legislative Delegation to work with Administrator Epperson to revise the language in the penny-sales tax referendum to include; to be used to retire Debt Service, Capital Improvement, and to help fund School Operations.

IX. Clarendon School District III Board of Trustees

Dr. George Green, Chairman of Clarendon School District III Board, began his presentation by stating that we have to protect and educate our citizens. He continued by stating that the district has already cut programs and has not been able to add those programs back or restore employees back to the district salary scale. Dr. Green stated that District III citizens are taxed higher than any other citizens in Clarendon County.

Dr. Green further stated that District III is funded \$250,000 less than the lowest funded district in the county. He continued by asking Council to fund School District III at the same level as the funding for School Districts II and I. He further continued his presentation by asking County Council to find some means to fund School District III students at the same level as the other districts in the County.

Dr. Green thanked all of the citizens for coming to the meeting and for their support.

Chairman Stewart thanked Dr. Green for his presentation. He continued by stating that County Council does not support ACT 388 because it will not be beneficial to any of us. It imposes taxes on small businesses.

Administrator Epperson stated that in order to have a consolidated millage, it would have to be approved by the legislature. If approved, it would cause a tax increase in Districts 1 and 2 and a decrease in District 3. Administrator Epperson further stated that we must think long term and not just fixing the problem temporarily.

Chairman Stewart stated that this is not an easy fix and we are willing to work with all school districts. He stated that we have worked very hard trying to come up with a solution.

X. Public Comments:

- Ms. Coker – stated that she taught in school district III for years. She continued by stating that every child in School District III deserved the same amount of money spent per child as in District I or District II. She concluded by stating that all students should be counted as children in Clarendon County and not as District I, II, or III.
- Representative Robert Ridgeway – stated that this year's the House Ways and Means has increased the funding per child by \$100.00.
- Ms. Bagnal – stated that she attended a finance meeting this week and out of the \$100.00 per child increase, the amount that the school district would be getting is a little over \$61,000, which is not enough to give a one-step increase to the teachers.
- Chairman Stewart asked what the status of the lawsuit is.
- Senator Johnson – stated that all of us here are working together and this is a tough situation. The lawsuit that was filed was twenty-one years ago and the Supreme Court came out and said that we have a problem. The Supreme Court has ordered the Legislature to get with the school districts and come up with another plan. He continued by stating that ACT 388 ties County Council's hands and if Council wanted to raise taxes, they can only go as far as ACT 388 would allow them to. The problem that we have is not just Clarendon County it's State Wide. Senator Johnson continued by stating that in order to have a countywide millage, we would have to have a consolidated district. He continue his comments by stating that we should not divide ourselves because the problem is not county wide it is state wide. Senator Johnson stated that the bill to have the language changed has already been drafted and it must pass the House, the Senate, and be signed by the Governor. If she doesn't sign it, we will have to have enough votes to override a veto.
- Laura Fleming – stated that when the penny sales tax bill is rewritten, why can't the amount of money per student be changed since this is sales tax money and not millage because all of us spend money in Summerton and Manning.
- Attorney Epperson – stated that the penny sales tax is split based on per pupil count on the 135 day of the year. First, it has to be split to pay debt reduction and then capital improvement. He continued by stating that the only two districts that had money left over were District II and District III. We are proposing an additional choice that would allow school districts to come before County Council and request 25% of the left over funds for school operations on an emergency basic.
- Jason Hickman – What is the justification that you have for not inverting the sale taxes? It's your decision and not District I and District II. It's more important to pay the light bill in one district than buying a new road sign in another district.
- Chairman Stewart – In order to do that, we will have to have one consolidated school district and you all do not want that. We have to do that in order for each school district to get treated the same. He stated that County Council does not run the school district; you have an elected school board that runs the school district.
- Citizen – is there a specific law that states that County Council cannot rebudget money throughout the year to give extra money to an agency that has a crisis. Consolidation would leave this end of the county drying up.
- Chairman Stewart - stated that the only way to get a consolidated mileage is to have a consolidated school district.
- James Carter – stated that the formula was set in 1987 when there wasn't a recession, isn't it time the formula be redone?
- Chairman Stewart – Yes, we agree.
- Mr. Pat Goodwin – Since we already have a County School Board, why can't we have a consolidated millage and why can't the county school board make the separation, can't we trust them to split the funds on a per pupil basis.
- Attorney Epperson – How would you determine how the school board would distribute the funds.
- Dr. George Green – stated that he has not heard any one asked for a consolidated milage, he said that they are asking for an inversion of sale taxes and we need Economic Developments.
- Chairman Stewart – stated that from the first meeting that we had, we said that we were going to do all that we can do.
- Citizen – What would a consolidation take?
- Attorney Epperson – Everything stays the same except we would have one superintendent, one school district, and one school board. There would be one school milage. The school would be considered as

an attendance area with the same debt until paid in full. The option would have to be proposed through Legislation.

- Chairman Stewart – stated that County Council is not proposing a school consolidation. He stated that a way to move forward is for the three school district boards get together to see if there was a way that we can move forward.
- Citizen – Since this side of the county covers more property, why can't district III get more money. District I and District II have two school districts within 10 miles apart.
- Attorney Epperson – the State law is set up on Ad voleum taxes and milage (assessed value). Thirty percent of property in District III is Agriculture, which does not generate a lot of money. He stated that 4% is legal residents which the county does not collect any more, the remaining percentage with businesses being 6% which does not generate a lot of money. Therefore, there is not enough assessed value in District III to generate the revenue needed to fund the school operations.
- Citizen – Consolidation is not the answer that we are looking for. We need to explore other avenues.
- Stacy McKenzie – Whose responsibility is it to bring more industries into the county?
- Chairman Stewart – it is the County Development Board's job to bring in Industries and we have representation from all three school districts. We have Blake Gibbons and Skip Osborne from district III and one open position.
- Citizen – Why is it more important for School District I to spend money to purchase a sign than for School District III to educate children?
- Chairman Stewart stated that District III has an elected school board, District II has an appointed school board and District I has an elected and appointed school board and they should be answering the questions as to why a school district is in so much debt. He further stated that County Council does not have the authority to tell schools how to spend their money. Chairman Stewart concluded by stating that no one is proposing consolidation of the three school districts and there is no easy answer to this problem.
- Councilman Blakely – stated that District III has a great school board, the teachers are dedicated, and they drove buses and are still the lowest paid in the state. He concluded by stating that the taxes are higher in District III than in District II or District I.
- Chairman Stewart – we are blessed to have dedicated teachers all across the county. He concluded by stating that County Council will do all that we can do to assist District III in whatever way that we can. He further stated that public comments would close. Public comments closed at 8:20 pm.

XI. Financial Report

Mr. Lynden Anthony, Controller, began his report by stating that the General Fund had Expenditures of \$12,782,270 year-to-date and Revenue figures were not available.

Mr. Anthony further stated that the Water and Sewer Department had Operating Revenue of \$477,314 and Operating Expenses of \$325,696 as of February 28, 2015. He stated that after depreciation, transfers, and interest expense, the Water and Sewer Department had a Net Utility Loss of \$29,286.

Mr. Anthony continued by stating that the Weldon Auditorium had Total Revenue of \$55,360, and Total Expenses of \$101,138. He stated that after transfers, the Weldon Auditorium ended the month of February with a zero balance.

Mr. Anthony concluded his report by stating that the C-Fund had a cash balance of \$1,324,723 as of January 31, 2015 of which \$1,454,762 has been committed to the remaining local paving projects and the state required projects leaving a deficit of \$130,039.

XII. Administrator's Report

Administrator Epperson began his report by stating that the renovation of the County Courthouse is continuing as scheduled. He continued by stating that the windows are being installed and we are looking at a completion date of June 2015.

He continued by giving Council an update on the following:

USDA Water Projects

- Phase IB – waiting on the rebids
- Phase IC - waiting on USDA approval.

DHEC Project

- Have a meeting with the architect on next week trying to get them to lower the cost.

Development Board Director

- Hired a Director and he will start on March 16, 2015

XIII. Chairman's Report

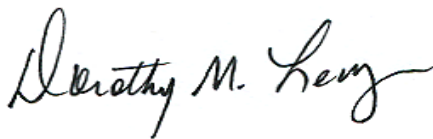
Chairman Stewart began his report by thanking the citizens of District III for attending the Council meeting and voicing their opinions. He concluded by stating the he would be traveling to Santee for a meeting with Central South Carolina Alliance.

XIV. Adjournment

Chairman Stewart stated that we have exhausted our agenda and he asked for a motion to adjourn.

On motion by Councilman Blakely and seconded by Councilman Richardson, Council voted Unanimous Approval to adjourn the council meeting. The Council Meeting ended at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dorothy M. Levy
Clerk to Clarendon County Council

